



315TH NEWSLETTER

WORLD WAR II 315th TROOP CARRIER GROUP ASSOCIATION

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I REMEMBER.....

Ziggy Zartman

Air Force Museum

One Glider Pilot's Memory

Flying a glider was completely
insane

Remember your MOS?

Meet me in St. Louis

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Carrier Group Association
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Readers are cordially invited
to submit material for the
NEWSLETTER

April, 1993

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As I am certain most of you know. Col H.B. Lyon's
wife, Mary Jane, passed away on December 16, 1992.

A REAL LADY in every sense of the word!

We certainly miss her and our sincerest sympathy is
extended to Col. Lyon and his family from everyone
who served in the 315th Troop Carrier Group.

More thoughts on Albuquerque (and, perhaps before):
It was so often mentioned that "we are not as young
as we used to be" or, "we are all getting older". These
are not necessarily profound truisms. But, live with
them we must.

The poet Robert Browning, in his poem *Rabbi Ben
Ezra* says "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to
be. The last of life, for which the first was made, our
times are in His hands....."

Remember age is not a time of life; it is a frame of
mind. Think about it.

Thought for the day:

The older the violin, the sweeter the tune.

John F. Andrews, Pres.

**REPORT FROM YOUR RECORDING
SECRETARY:**

For years I have been trying to get some one to write the story of Troop Carrier world wide operations during WW II. Gerard Devlin (Silent Wings) Milton Dank (The Glider Gang) and others were all busy with other projects at the time. Many books have been written, and some are very good, but they just cover a Squadron or Groups operation during the war and most are of the operation in the ETO.

A couple of months before I went to Holland in 1989 to represent the old 315th at the Commemoration of the Battle of Arnhem, I received a letter from George Cholewczynski. George is an Author and an honorary member of the Polish Airborne that we worked with in Holland. He sent me a copy of three or four chapters of the book he had written on the Polish participation in WW II. He wanted me to read it on the way over and to meet him at the train station in Arnhem. This I did, and we have become good friends since - - - although he may wish he had never met me by now.

I started working on him to write the book at that time but he was kind of burnt out after all of the work on the last book and was not too enthused. Many of you met George when he came to our reunion in Norfolk. He sat in when the Confederate Air Force interviewed Col. Lyon and others. That did it - he felt that there was a good story in Troop Carrier, but he planned to just cover the MTO and ETO. I told him that if he just covered that, he would be missing a great part of the story. I gave him some contacts for the CBI and Pacific and he has come up with some great material. George has been working on this book for over two years and has attended quite a few other T.C. Reunions to obtain lots of war stories.

The reason for all of the above information - - George will be contacting some of you for stories and information that only you can help him with - in a few more years there will be no more eye witnesses. If he contacts you - please help him - or if you have a story that you think he might be able to use - call him. 201/473-1783.

Dave Benfield, one of our honorary members from England, was at the Albuquerque reunion. Dave has spent quite a few hundred dollars of his own money to have the 315th poster made. Many of the members at the past two reunions have bought them to frame and hang in their dens or offices. For you who have not seen them, it is a color poster 16 X 19 and has one plane from each Squadron that was shot down in Holland. Also are the color insignia of the 82nd AB, the British Red Devils and the Polish Brigade that the 315th worked with on the different invasions. If you will send me a check for \$10.00, Robert L. Cloer, 1417 Valley View Dr., Yuba City, CA 95993 I will send you a poster and a large layout map of our old base at Spanhoe. After taking out the cost of postage and mailer tube, the balance goes to Dave..

Went back to Dallas Oct 14 - 18 for the WW II Glider Pilots Reunion. Saw many of the old 315th GPs, many who have been very active and played an important part in this organization. Have been to quite a few of the GP reunions and they are always great. The Banquet on Saturday night served about 800.

One of the events was a trip out to the Terrell Texas Airport where the Silent Wings Museum is located. If you are ever in the area - don't miss the Museum. The center piece of all of the displays is that CG4A. I had forgotten what a monster that thing was that they tied to our tail. Some of you have ask me where you can get one of those old Airborne Troop Carrier shoulder patches. You can get the patch for \$4.50 each by ordering them from: Silent Wings Museum, P.O.Box 725, Terrell, TX 75160. The Catalog No. for the patch is .032. They also have a 4 color Airborne Troop Carrier lapel pin for \$3.50. Cat.No. 017. Add \$1.50 for package and postage.

MINI-REUNIONS -At both the 90 reunion in Norfolk and this past reunion in Albuquerque, our Officers and Board of Directors have suggested that we have mini-reunions in the off years. These would be held in different parts of the country and give more people the chance to meet with old buddies that they would not get to see otherwise. Because of health or financial problems, some of our old buddies can not make these long trips. If you would like to host a mini - let Ed Papp know and he will have the info in the newsletter so members , not only in your area, but others who might be planning a trip, can enjoy your reunion.

While I am not looking for more work, a few fellows have ask about a Mini-Reunion in "RENO - The Biggest Little City in The World". **NOW HEAR THIS** - I will be glad to put on a Mini in RENO in May of 1993 - **IF**- enough of you want it and drop me a note telling me so, before the 1st of January. I will need to block at least 25 to 30 rooms and I can tell you the room rates will be far less than any room rate since Thomas got us the Sheraton in Dallas for \$32, back in 1978. I need to know before the first of the year ! If a card is too much effort, give me a call - 916/674-3681.

At the reunion, some of you asked where you could get the lapel pins of the 315th Group and each of the Squadrons that we wear on our caps or lapels. I called Charles W. Aresta in Honolulu, and he still has a few left. If you want one for your Sqdn., specify the Sqdn. and the 315th Group. The cost is \$3.50 ea, including packing and postage. Send your request to Charles at: 1813 Sereno St., Honolulu, HI 96817-2318

AGAIN - it was great seeing you all in Albuquerque, and our THANKS again to the great job that Bernie and Bette Brown and their committee did. IT WAS GREAT !!!

ALL THE BEST,

Doc

As you have noted from reading the President's letter on the first page of this issue, Mary Jane Lyon, beloved wife of our H.B. Lyon, passed away in December of last year. All of us who came to know this gracious lady loved her and looked forward to seeing and chatting with her at our reunions.

When the news of her death became known, many of us thought it fitting to remember her by making a contribution to St. Joseph of the Pines, the nursing home where Mary Jane received such concerned and loving care during her final illness.

Accordingly, after checking with officers and directors of the 315th TCG Association, John Andrews, our president, directed that a \$500. contribution, drawn from the Association's treasury, be sent to St. Joseph of the Pines Health Care Center in Southern Pines NC. In due time, our president received a letter from an official of the Center expressing thanks for the memorial contribution. It is reprinted alongside.

St. Joseph of the Pines
Office of Development

February 16, 1993

John F. Andrews, President
315th Troop Carrier Group Association U.S.A.A.F.
P.O. Box 636, Beach City OH 44608

Dear Mr. Andrews: This will acknowledge with sincere appreciation a gift of \$500. from the WWII 315th Troop Carrier Group Association to St. Joseph of the Pines Health Care Center. As you indicated, this contribution is made to honor the memory of Mary Jane Lyon, wife of Colonel Lyon under whom many members of the 315th Troop Carrier Group served.

Obviously, both Colonel and Mrs. Lyon were beloved by many and we acknowledge the thoughtfulness of the members of your fine organization in remembering them through your generosity.

Please be assured that these funds will be applied to those programs at St. Joseph of the Pines which seek to improve the lives of those whom we serve.

Sincerely, Everett R. Nordstrom, Director
Office of Development

Here is a letter we reproduce with Col. Lyons' permission:

Edward M. Papp
200 Bryant Avenue
Glen Ellyn IL 60137

February 12, 1992

Dear Ed:

May I express my heart-felt thanks and appreciation to all of our kind friends of the 315th Association for the telephone calls, flowers and the donations made to St. Joseph of the Pines Health Center, Southern Pines, in memory of Mary Jane who passed away on December 16, 1992.

These expressions of sympathy and caring have made my burden easier to bear during this time of sorrow and also to both of us during her lengthy hospitalization at St. Joseph.

Mary Jane was a loving wife and companion for over 50 years of marriage and Mother of our children Pat, Tom and Melissa. Her loss to us is indescribable.

Most sincerely,
(Signed) "HB"
H.B. Lyon

Copy to:
John Andrews, President
315th T.C. Group Association

TAKING YOUR LUMPS..... A MESSAGE FROM A "WASP"

One of the 310th Squadron's holiday gifts in December of 1944 was shiny, big and heavy...an unwrapped (unpainted) Consolidated B-24 "Liberator" bomber that had been converted into a bulk fuel tanker, the four-engine C-109. The Spanhoe weather officer and Santa Claus cooperated that white-Xmas day...glistening in about two inches of new, wet snow was our latest "toy!" Each squadron received one (I think)! This Army Air Corps mobile gasoline "station" delivered where beckoned...and, cash or charge, the "price" was always the same...ORDERS, an 8x11 "chit" that said: "YOU GO" and was signed "the brass." On just one flight, the C-109 could pump somewhere around 3000 gals. of fuel...but, the crew didn't do windscreens, didn't check dipsticks, and didn't control the key to the nearest "john".

"Fumes" reminded you that it was not a C-47 or C-46; and if a crew member showed up who smoked, we took his matches; if he was "high tech", we took his "Zippo"! When someone asked for a "ride", we took a blank sheet of paper, marked it with a big "8".....and advised them to report to Doc Hatton! One 310th RO (Gil Daney) remarked "lighting cigarettes after flights in a C-109 was always a problem...when your whole body was shaking, you had to synchronize your arms to smooth out the TPMs (tremors per minute). If you crewed one of those gas-buggies, you must recall having felt like "Lindy" enroute to Paris in 1927...surrounded by those extra fuel tanks. There were fuel cells crammed into the nost section, the main fuselage, the bomb bays and tshe wings...including Tokyo tip cells that gave the Davis wing an extra dimension of "flap." No gun turrets marred the streamlining and no armor plate gave it additional weight

Once you crossed the Channel (post D-Day), your mood was a toss-up..kinda like being strapped to one of Werner Von Braun's V-2's; or, riding a "big" Chinese firecracker; maybe (assuming NASA had been in business) feeling like a replacement for the chimps that preceded the original seven astronauts. Although we didn't have "grunts" until the "NAM" fracas, one disgruntled "ground-pounder" (friendly or enemy)....even the random fire of a reveller celebrating Allied successes, and you could be a factor in an un-solved puzzle...unsolved, bvecause all the pieces would be missing! Of course, when young and "hot" as we were (nobody was "cool" in those days), you just didn't project your mind much beyond the scene on which you focused...WAR.....youths' "drug" of the early forties.

HEREWITH, WE OFFER YET
ANOTHER "I REMEMBER"
FROM ONE OF OUR FAVORITE
CORRESPONDENTS NOW
RESIDENT IN THE HAMLET OF
PARACHUTE, COLORADO.

ZIGGY

When the destination field loomed ahead, your odds improved greatly...now, you had at least a 50/50 chance that you would not blow the nose wheel tire when slamming the tanker onto a noisy, undulating, slippery-when-wet PSP (pierced steel planing) runway that seemed always just short enough to require heavy braking...if, the fully-loaded three-wheeler was to be kept out of the over-run (often a quagmire). In the 310th, we always carried an extra nose wheel

assembly...the crew chiefs could "read" pilots (at least this one) like a book! I never buzzed the tower in a C-109! An avid reader, me, not Albert Einstein, had already reported that LIGHT (186,000 mps chains of photons) was "heavy...not unlike teeny-weeny bullets. Phobic, I didn't want the tower operators aiming the Aldis gun (red light) in the

direction of the "fume wagon!"

Yet, this new concept for dispensing bulk gas, probably saved more than a few aircrew types from single...even double hernias. Two full Jerricans....one in each hand, felt like two 100 lb. sacks of cement after the first few "trips" to load or unload the "goonies". (My now-sagging shoulders remind me that a normal load was around 125 cans.) Oddly, the best in-flight coffee I ever tasted, was aboard C-47s loaded with Jerricans of fuel...it was brewed carefully...very carefully (remember those little open flame stoves?)

Guys like George (not the auto-pilot) but General Patton, who, when in a fully gung-ho mood, pistols drawn, could only be halted when his tanks ran out of petrol. He'd take out his hanky and polish the "three star bar," then get on his field phone with a trickle-down message ("I need gas. fast") starting with Ike's deputy! At the end of the trickle, sometimes, was a troop carrier OPS hut...which, on occasion answered:"310th Squadron, Hamby's rough-riders." For most of us though, the C-109 was too late; we already had taken our lumps! Don't take my word for it; check with the Doc!

Strangely, another of the thrills when strapped to a C-109 took place on the ground...TAXIING through the 310th assigned parking area. This happened frequently when "shooting" landings. Shortly after passing the maintenance hanger located near the end of Runway "30"(?), the peripheral taxiway made a 90 degree left turn and headed downhill to the hollow in the wooded area where the 310th hardstands lined each side of the taxiway...and, the hill bottomed out on about a 75 degree right turn heading toward Runway "26". With all

four Pratt & Whitney's in full IDLE, and braking intermittently, those huge Curtiss electric "fans" still breezed you through the turn fast enough that crew chiefs and ROs who saw you coming always found something to do at the BACK of the hardstand, including the guy re-stocking the coffee, spam and fruit cocktail in "olde 622's" pantry (do you remember the "Thanksgiving" that we delivered tons of canned boneless turkey to the troops, requisitioning a few cans for our C-47 pantries? Benjamin Franklin would have been proud, knowing that his "national" bird had served the country's fines...US.

After the GREEN PROJECT, me, Bill Perkins (Wm. S. Jr.--I remember him because he gave me rides in his beautiful Packard convertible) and other 315th'ers, were assigned to the 4th Ferrying Group at Ed Crump's town (Memphis TN) flying final mission warplanes to Davis-Monthan Airbase outside Tucson AZ. On two, maybe three flights, the "bird" was a LIBERATOR that had survived the sky over German industrial targets, or perhaps an Allied airborne armada bundle drop in which the "heavies" joined troop carrier operations. At D-M the bomber survived one final attack. Like killer-bees from across the border, a "cosmoline SWAT squad" replaced the plane's "wartime muscle" with a jelly compound and tethered the fuselage to a Sonora sand hill until Uncle Sam made up his mind to give it to a museum, to have the War Assets Administrator sell it, to cut it up as scrap, or, let it sit there in the Arizona desert until Senator Goldwater came up; with a pork-barrel project involving old war birds (and Barry did...using many of the WWII relics as remote-controlled research drones).

The point of all this: back at Spanhoe, I thought that Consolidated's tanker had ended my bouts with lump tissue weaknesses. 'Twas not so! Somehow, during the two or three day mission to pick up and deliver the last "24" that I ever flew, I was exposed to the MUMPS virus...finishing the flight feverish and with my jaws swollen and tender. No big deal...a mere child's problem UNLESS, as mumps have a way of doing with males, the swelling drops (out of sight) into the "squirm banks." By the time Gloria met our deadhead flight back to Memphis, I was a candidate for a freshly dug hole with choices like "Arlington" and "Gettysburg.": The Docs told Gloria that I hadn't been so close to using the notch on my dog tags since the day my brother hit me on the head with a baseball bat! It was a toss-up for about a week, then, gratefully, the "sweats" (and swelling) subsided. The

last words of the Doc as we departed the hospital were "Take good care of that son, he'll probably be the only family you'll ever have." After three girls and one more boy, Gloria and I decided that the Doc didn't know much about Levi's "genes."

Three or four weeks later, I flew the last plane, a twin-engine C-45, from the WASP (Womens Army Service Pilots) training base at Sweetwater TX to D-M. Scrolled on the windscreen with lipstick was a weathered, smeared and faded message that (at least I thought) said: "Ziggy...please treat our last "baby" with TLC" and was signed "But, you needn't 'pamper' it. Love, Jacqueline!!!"

+++++

Gotta go; it's time to take my daily APC tablet. Doc Hutton gave me a BIIG bottle when we left Amiens.

Ziggy took time out from taking his pills to drop us a line after talking with Jim and Ann Drummey late last year. His message follows:

"DRUM-BEAT" FOILS TAPS

Good news concerning one of our reunion regulars, Jim Drummey...missing at Albuquerque. Told by a squad of docs that he'd been living on borrowed time, and given a 5-15% chance of successful surgery, he opted for an 8 hour procedure...aortic valve replacement (no ordinary valve job). He's at fighting weight, doing great, and plans to be there in St. Louis. He knows how to recover from bad landings! Incidentally, his new address is 200 Alliance Way, Apt. 358 Manchester NH 03102. Tel: 603/669-4113

Your editor received a card from Father Gerard Thurling, our Honorary Member living in Holland. The message:

Dear Papp and 315th friends: Just read your November 315th NEWSLETTER. I enjoyed it very much, especially Ziggy Zartman's story about the Poles-Driel mission Sept. 21, 1944. Things go well here. We are preparing for the 50 yr. Anniversary celebration and hope to see many of you.

Bill Brinson sends the following material we think many of our readers will find interesting.

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR MOS (MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY)?

The Table of Organization and Equipment (TO & E) of the 315th Troop Carrier Group authorized positions from a Duty Soldier through an Air Base Commander. The MOS was the job title and the "SSN" was the number that accompanied it. It was all included in AAF Manual 35-1, Military Personnel Classification and Duty Assignment.

How many group members ever read their job description? Here are a few:

DUTY SOLDIER (590)

Performs various non-specialized jobs such as airplane handler, messenger, orderly, warehouseman, cooks helper, base maintenance man or other duties required in organization to which assigned.

May assist technicians in performance of their jobs. May supervise drill or fatigue details.

AIRPLANE AND ENGINE MECHANIC (747)

Assists in performing prescribed inspections and maintenance of aircraft.

Examines portions of aircraft such as wings, fuselage, stabilizers, flight control surfaces, propeller, and landing gear for evidence of damage or wear such as cracks, bent or broken members, and looseness which might cause dangerous vibration. Corrects such defects by appropriate maintenance, minor repairs, adjustments, or unit replacement. Refers specialized repairs of propellers, instruments, hydraulic and electrical systems to appropriate specialists. Cleans all accessible structures and parts with appropriate cleaning agents. Manipulates controls in cockpit to insure proper operation and alignment of flight control systems. Makes required adjustments by correcting tension of control cables or by replacing badly worn control cables. Assists in inspection and maintenance of engine and in changing engines. At stipulated intervals, and with the assistance of other mechanics, disconnects engine from its mounting, removes it from airplane and makes replacement using mechanic's tools and equipment and technical orders as a guide to maintenance procedures. Assists in preparing engines and other units for shipment.

Places all essential items of miscellaneous equipment such as life rafts, parachutes, adequate supply of breathing oxygen and appropriate forms and technical orders in proper storage places aboard airplane. Must have a knowledge of AAF forms and technical orders and weight and balance procedures.

Completion of a course in aircraft inspection and maintenance at an Army school or equivalent experience is required.

AIRPLANE MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN (750)

Airplane Crew Chief, Airplane Flight Chief, Airplane Inspector (1st & 2nd Echelon), Airplane Line Chief

Supervises the inspection, maintenance, adjustment, and minor repair of aircraft and aircraft equipment.

Performs prescribed inspections of aircraft to determine necessary servicing, adjustments, or parts replacements. Determines priority or jobs and assigns crews or individual specialists to tasks. Thoroughly checks maintenance work to assure proper condition of aircraft. Warms up engines and taxis airplanes. Checks weight and balance computation of flight maintenance gunner. Instructs subordinates in interpretation of technical orders and in maintenance methods.

Analyzes and troubleshoots unusual malfunctioning of aircraft. Coordinates all maintenance operations to expedite restoring aircraft to serviceable condition. Supervises maintenance of shop records, airplane and engine maintenance forms, and requisition and care of tools, equipment, parts and supplies.

Must have a thorough working knowledge of all assemblies, systems and AAF Technical Orders.

Considerable experience in the inspection and maintenance of aircraft is required. Completion of a course in aircraft maintenance at an Army school is desirable.

RADIO OPERATOR AAF (756)

Operates ground transmitting and receiving equipment; sends and receives messages using letters and numerals of the International Morse Code, CW, ICW, tone or light signals in the same code.

Receives International Morse Code signals copying by handprinting at a minimum speed of 16 five-letter random code groups per minute without error for a minimum period of three consecutive minutes out of five.

Transmits International Morse Code signals, using hand key, at a minimum speed of 16 five-letter random code groups per minute without error for a minimum period of two consecutive minutes out of three.

Handles without error, a minimum of fifteen plain-dress normal form messages (averaging 10 five-letter code groups of text) per hour in a field radio net of two or more stations through interference.

Normally operates ground-to-air and point-to-point, changing frequencies as required. Tunes radio equipment accurately and quickly to any required frequency covered by coils and installed equipment. Maintains calibration charts, revising transmitter tuning data as necessary. Must possess a thorough working knowledge of Combined Radiotelephone and Radiotelegraph and Authentication Procedures. Should be familiar with commonly used low grade cryptographic equipment and systems. Receives and transmits by light signals at a minimum speed of 5 words per minute. Maintains station logs and message files.

Makes periodic inspections of radio equipment. Keeps equipment clean, inspects antenna systems, cords, plugs, telegraph key and control switches and makes all necessary adjustments. Tests all AAF radio equipment customarily installed, such as receivers, transmitters, power supply auxiliaries and accessories. Changes tubes or tuning coils as necessary.

Completion of AAF radio operator course at an Army school or equivalent experience is required.

PILOT, TWO-ENGINE (1051)

Pilots two-engine aircraft and commands crew. Ascertains, prior to mission, that aircraft has been properly inspected by crew members; takes off, operates, and lands airplane under varying flying conditions and such hazards as adverse weather, low-altitude and night flying; maintains flight records and reports observations made during mission.

Must have thorough knowledge of general and local flying regulations and meteorology. Must meet prescribed physical standards.

Must be a rated pilot and have completed transition training in two-engine aircraft.

NAVIGATOR (1034)

Navigates aircraft over land and sea by dead reckoning, pilotage, and celestial and radio navigation to reach objective at a predetermined time without circling or departing from intended track. Tests and inspects all navigation equipment prior to mission and reports to pilot; receives instructions as to destination, course, time of arrival, and weather reports; navigates aircraft by use of navigation instruments such as drift meter, pelorus, aircraft octant, radio compass and aperiodic compass; computes effect of various factors on course and plots projected courses on charts; maintains log, initiates requests for radio aids, and checks position periodically; furnishes other crew members such data as wind direction and velocity, ground speed, and drift on any heading; checks data for errors after completion of flight and recalibrates navigation instruments. May be required to perform duties as a bombardier, gunner, co-pilot or radio operator.

Must be able to pinpoint position of aircraft by reference to map and visible landmarks. Navigates by celestial means; determines position by radio fix methods and send and receive radio telegraph code and visual blinker signals. Must be proficient in calibrating and ground swinging of magnetic compass; aligning drift meter and pelorus; calibrating airspeed meter, radio compass, and other navigation instruments. Must have thorough knowledge of machine-gun sights land deflection problems, and be familiar with effect of weather conditions on military operations. Must meet prescribed physical standards.

Must have completed navigation training prescribed by Army Air Forces.

Must have completed high school courses in mathematics and physics.

Bill Brinson reports a telephone call from David Johnson of Sandalwood, The Street, Horham, Eye, Suffolk IP21 5DX England (Editor's note: Wow! Isn't that some kinda address?) Mar. Johnson has devised a commemorative plate marking the 50th anniversary of the 8th Air Force arriving in England. It is a handsome plate with the 8th AF shoulder patch in the center, the American and British flags, and various U.S. aircraft are pictured. Around the circumference of the plate are the names of all Groups what were members of the Eighth. At the eleven o'clock position on the plate are inscribed the names of the five troop carrier Groups who were, for various periods, assigned to the Eighth AF—60th, 62nd, 64th, 315th and 434th. (All were, for very short periods except the 315th). The plate is made by Royal Worcester and the diameter of the plate is 8 1/4 inches. Cost of the plate, including shipping is \$42.60 and, if ordered, will be received, Mr. Johnson said, 8 to 10 weeks after receipt of the order. Those interested can write either George Pickard, 3936 Lake Manuka Road, Gaylord MI 49735 or LeRoy C. Wilcox 330E 3200 North Street, Provo UT 84604. Make checks payable to the man you write and designate on the check that it is for the commemorative plate.

When Alan Speer saw this story in the Philadelphia *INQUIRER* he knew where to send it after reading it that day. Our thanks to Alan for remembering to send this very interesting to us so you could enjoy it too.

"FLYING A PLANE INTO WORLD WAR II WAS PERILOUS. FLYING A GLIDER WAS COMPLETELY INSANE"

The big C-47 Transports thundered onto the runway. Jeeps darted back and forth. Heavily armed soldiers scurried between planes. Others smeared powdered charcoal on their faces, checked their rifles, and prayed with chaplains.

For pilot George "Pete" Buckley, months of hard training had come down to this one heart-pounding moment on a dark British airfield--just past midnight, June 6, 1944. D-Day.

He was dressed to kill. Ammunition clips and hand grenades bulged from his pockets, a .45 caliber handgun hung from his belt, and a folding carbine was slung over his shoulder.

"I didn't know what I had gotten myself into," says Buckley, who was then 19 years old. "When I saw the fellas that were going with me, I put on my best face. I tried to make it look like I wasn't upset. Inside was another story."

He walked around a strange, long-winged aircraft, one of hundreds poised on English runways for the invasion of Nazi-occupied France.

They had no motors, no weapons, no armor plating of any kind. They were ugly and squat, little more than gray-green painted fabric stretched over a framework of steel tubing and wood. They were so flimsy and odd-looking that they earned nicknames: "flying coffin," "kite," "Flat-faced Flora", and "slab-sided Sally." Yet they would become airborne trucks of World War II, ferrying troops, jeeps and artillery into battles around the world.

These were America's combat gliders, a silent-winged air force. They'd cut off from towplanes, plummet out of the sky at up to 90 mph and make "controlled crashes" while bullets and flak zipped through their skins.

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the first graduating class of American glider pilots, daring, cocky men known for their devil-may-care attitude, their disdain for saluting and rules---and above all, their love of flying. They wore silver wings emblazoned with the letter G and told everyone it stood for *guts*.

On a runway of the Aldermaston airfield, 3000 miles from home, Buckley was about to earn his G, gliding into combat for the first time. He remembers making small talk with the three troopers who were part of his cargo, seeing their cigarettes glowing in the dark glider, and the barrel of an artillery piece protruding menacingly into the cockpit.

Soon there were no more words. One after another, the C-47 towplanes roared down the airfield, whisking the gliders into the air behind them.

At 1:19 a.m., Buckley looked through the Plexiglas window of glider No. 49 at a thick nylon tow rope pulling taut. He drew the wheel back, focused on the towplanes reddish exhaust, and soared into the black sky to join a growing flock of planes and gliders.

One of the troopers shouted "Look out, Hitler, here we come!" There was a burst of whoops and hollers. Then, just the sound of rushing wind and fluttering fabric.

"I thought to myself, I may be dead in three hours," says Buckley, now 67 and living in Milford, Conn. "It really hit me....there's no turning back."

In hindsight, World War II always looks like a technological spawning ground. It was the war that gave us radar, sonar, the first jet planes---and the atomic bomb. And yet amid the powerful new tools of war, there was a role for *powerless* planes. The gliders would write a colorful, if brief, chapter of aviation history---after overcoming many obstacles.

David Trexler ran into one in August 1942. High over Spencer, Iowa, he cut off the ignition on his small prop plane and began descending toward the airfield below. It was his first solo---what the pilots called a "deadstick" landing because the propeller stops spinning. He came up short.

The landing gear of his plane caught the fence near the airstrip, and his wheels were sheared off when they hit a nearby ditch. The plane slid on its belly across an adjacent road and nosed into the ditch on the other side.

"The seat belt broke and I hit two structural metal bars above the instrument panel," recalls Trexler, now 70 of Boulder, Colorado. "I had black eyes, loose teeth and two giant welts on my forehead. I was flying the next day."

Trexler's solo glide was part of the training for the new glider pilots. They'd "sail" power-driven planes, gain expertise and move on to the gliders. Scores of them were injured or killed in collisions and crashes as the United States and Britain rushed to build the new airborne force and match German's early glider successes.

The first Nazi victory had been stunning: the capture of Eben Emael in Belgium, considered then the most modern, most powerful fort in the world. It had minefields, anti-aircraft batteries, sound-detecting devices to hear oncoming planes, and roofs and walls of reinforced concrete more than five feet thick. It had armored guns that could lob shells 12 miles and 850 well-stocked troops in air-conditioned tunnels below ground.

But at dawn on May 10, 1940, German gliders quietly landed 78 troops on the grass-covered top of the fort. They used newly developed implosion charges to blow up gun emplacements and sealed the garrison inside. The German army arrived the next day, and Eben Emael fell. In 1941, the Germans used gliders again in Greece and Crete.

The Allies took notice. By June 1942, William T. Sampson 2nd became the first of thousands of U.S. pilots to wear the glider wings. He got them after making a spectacular entrance before a crowd of 25,000 at National Airport in Washington, D.C. Several propeller-driven planes landed first. Then, Sampson cut off from his towplane and silently swooped onto the airfield, rolling up to a red flag in front of the packed stands.

"I was amazed, to be honest with you," says Sampson, 78, now a retired Air Force colonel living in Stafford, VA. "It would have been a mess if I didn't do it right." He posed for photos with Marlene Dietrich, who was there to draw spectators, sell war bonds and encourage enlistments.

Many flights were not as flawless as Sampson's. Former glider pilot Milton Dank recalls losing his friend Lt. Robert Gray Hamilton in a crash on Dec. 23, 1943, at the

Laurinburg-Maxton airfield in North Carolina. Hamilton was flying the glider behind the number-one towplane in a night formation.

"I had a radio tuned to the control tower so I could hear when the formation was coming back, and I listened, horrified, as the tower gave clearance for a C-47 to take off," says Dank, now 71 of Wyncote. "They didn't know it would go up through the gliders."

Dank was assigned to clearing the landing gliders from the field, looked up and saw a "bluish flash"---the C-47's-47's wingtip smashing the tail of Hamilton's glider. The fragile craft plunged to the edge of the airfield.

"We raced over to the sound of the crash and we found Bob half thrown out of the windshield, dead," he says. "It was as though every bone in his body was broken. He must have died instantly."

Dank was going to be the best man at Hamilton's wedding two days later, on Christmas. Instead, he consoled the lieutenant's mother, and later---before gliding into the battle for southern France---he chalked a message on the nose of his aircraft: "Hamilton's Reply.."

One of the worst accidents occurred during a demonstration over St. Louis in 1943 when a glider lost a wing and hurtled to the ground, killing all the passengers: the mayor, members of the city council and military officials. Investigators learned that a subcontractor---a *coffin* manufacturer---had made the wrong fitting for the main wing spar. The wing had crumpled when it broke loose.

Most of the major contractors for U.S. gliders were aircraft companies, though there was at least one refrigerator manufacturer. Parts were turned out by piano companies, furniture makers, and manufacturers of pool tables and canoes.

The British glider program had problems, too. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was watching a Royal Air Force demonstration in 1941 when a glider smashed into a treetop, ejecting its occupants. One overshot the runway, hitting a crowd and barely missing Churchill. In another demonstration, two gliders carrying 50 members of Parliament crashed on landing. Minor injuries were reported.

America's pilots continued practicing on their CG-4A gliders in England while learning to fly the larger British glider, the Horsa. The island nation had become a huge aircraft carrier, with landing strips everywhere.

Two members of the 438th Troop Carrier Group were flying a Horsa in 1944 when it fell apart in mid-air. Both of them were killed, and their comrades were left depressed. The unit's doctor, Albert J. Himmelfarb, brought the men a couple of bottles of whiskey and laid them on a cot saying "This is the only medicine I can give you."

Himmelfarb, now 82, of Pikesville, MD, says he "gave out a lot of medicine. It was my standard prescription for any tragedy...I thought the gliders were suicide machines." It would be worse in combat: up to 40 percent of the pilots and the infantry they carried would be killed or wounded on some of the missions to come.

The glider troopers made up a song about their plight called the "Hymn of the Airborne." It pointed out that they were paid the same as regular infantry, though they took the same chances as the better-paid paratroopers----*without* parachutes. The words were sung to the rollicking tune of "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze."

Here are the words:

*Oh once I was happy but now I'm airborne,
Riding in gliders all tattered and torn
The pilots are daring, all caution they scorn,
But the pay is exactly the same.*

At 3:45 D-DAY MORNING, GLIDER co-pilot Gordon Mohr looked from his cockpit at a mesmerizing sight: the French coast lit up with brilliant flashes, like lightning in a thunderstorm. The antiaircraft fire arced across the sky as he crossed Cherbourg and closed in on his landing zone in Normandy.

"I couldn't believe I was in this situation: it seemed like a story you were reading," he says. "You didn't know what was going to happen..I started to pray"

Behind Mohr were two nervous soldiers and a huge radio set for the Army's command center. The set was so large it trapped him and pilot Jim Malloy inside the cockpit. They'd have to kick their way through the glider fabric when it landed to escape.

"I still consider it insanity," says Mohr, now 70 of Syracuse NY. "We wanted to do the right thing and stay alive...We knew we were making history, but we didn't dwell on it that much."

Besides braving antiaircraft fire, the pilots had to go through Rommel's "asparagus" ---large poles---named for German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel---planted in the earth to smash the gliders as they landed. And they had to watch for fields flooded by the Nazis, man-made trenches, and natural obstructions such as hedgerows.

About 4 a.m., the first gliders began landing. In the lead, Lt.Col. Mike Murphy, the senior glider pilot in the European Theater, guided his craft onto a field, slid 800 feet along wet grass and smashed into trees at 50 m.p.h. In the wreckage were the bodies of Brig. Gen. Donald F. Pratt and Lt. John M. Butler. Murphy broke both legs, but the general's aide, Lt. John I. May, was unhurt.

Minutes later, Mohr's glider dropped in, with enemy fire crackling all around. "We got down OK, kicked out the fabric and went right out," says Mohr. "Other gliders were coming in, too, crashing into one another and hitting cows. They ended up every which way, with wings broken off and landing gears collapsed."

Some gliders landed *aboveground*, in the branches of trees. Others made it safely to ground---where the occupants were machine-gunned while sitting on the glider benches, with their helmets on and M-1 rifles between their legs.

Pilot Pete Buckley and his passengers say the fire "was really intense, coming up in every direction" as he neared Hiesville and Vierville. The troopers were getting nervous. "Their eyes must have been popping out," he says. "Mine must have been out two inches. When the small-arms fire went through the fabric, it made a snapping and popping noise."

Buckley banked left and dropped blindly through the darkness until he made out the faint outline of a field with trees around the edge. "The landing was smooth as glass at first," he says. "Then there was a crash and loud splintering noise. We hit a ditch the Germans had dug; it was 12 feet wide and 6 feet deep. The glider went in, and the floor broke open as it climbed the other side, scooping in dirt and grass."

As they got out, the Nazis set off a flare overhead, and the GIs dropped to the ground. The enemy was looking for them. How many were there? How were they armed? In the early hours of D-Day, also known as "Operation Overlord", the invasion's success depended on those first liberators----the glider troopers and paratroopers. They'd help stop the Germans from reinforcing the beaches and secure landing sites for other gliders.

In the daylight, pilot Charles Eckhardt saw "planes and gliders strung out ahead of me for as far as I could see. And down below, all the boats and the landing craft were going to the beaches," says Eckhardt, now 74 of Versailles, MO. "It was an immense number. I never saw anything to equal it before or since."

As he crossed land for the village of St. Mere Eglise, Eckhardt heard the enemy fire. "It sounded like someone was setting off string after string of loud firecrackers," he says. "Everyone was quiet, wondering what the hell would happen."

Eckhardt told his co-pilot, "Get ready. We're going down." Then he reached up and hit the towrope release. The glider scooted across 300 feet of open field. He and the other troopers jumped from the craft and lifted its hinged nose to retrieve the jeep inside.

Pilot S. Tipton "Tip" Randolph, now 69 of Freehold NJ, came over the evening of June 6 in a Horsa loaded with a jeep and small artillery piece. As he headed across the English Channel, he recalled thinking about his mother's opposition to his flying.

About 1,200 feet below him, the huge guns of the battle wagons were belching fire and brimstone at the German defenders, he recalls. Over land, he looked down at St. Mere Eglise and saw buildings aflame. "We brushed through some trees at the landing site, applied full flaps to cut our speed and touched the ground," he says. It was a good landing. He and his co-pilot and seven troopers got out all right.

Pilot Robert C. Casey flew in early June 7 in another Horsa, carrying 22 troopers and boxes of anti-tank mines. "Unfortunately, we were nose-heavy and snapped our nose wheel upon landing, skidding across the field into the hedgerow at the opposite end," says Casey, now 60 of Southfield NY, "The captain and four of his men who had been sitting directly behind us, were injured." The captain had a broken leg, and his men hurt their legs and backs. Casey and his co-pilot were unscathed.

Amid the tumult of battle, a Frenchman was walking a cow down the road. "Since we were not precisely sure where we were, I stopped him and showed him our map, and he was able to point out our location," Casey says. "Shortly after, someone started firing at us."

Soon, American tanks were rumbling up from the beaches. The glider pilots had done their job. The Allies had a toehold in France. Now, the pilots had to make their way back to the coast and board transport ships bound for England---to fly other missions.

Milton Dank was sailing over the coast of southern France when his glider suddenly shuddered and quickly dropped 150 feet. He was fighting for his life, trying to regain control of the aircraft before it fell apart.

A stray shot fired from the USS Tuscaloosa had blasted through a section of the tail, obliterating a stabilizer that gave the glider its lift on the right side.

Now, instead of flying slightly above the towplane in the normal position, the glider was dragging below it and yawing to the right. Dank was carrying two artillerymen and their jeep on an invasion of southern France on Aug. 15, 1944.

"We were in trouble," says Dank who was flying "Hamilton's Reply." We fought it for 15 terrible minutes until we got to the landing zone. Beneath them was a vineyard, a narrow field of soft ground with stakes and vines. "When we released, we didn't know if the glider would fly or not, whether we would nose over and plunge into the ground," Dank says. "We simply went straight ahead...Everything was OK..."

Nineteen years later, Dank says, he was talking about his close call during a bridge game at a next-door neighbor's house and was "horrified to learn that my partner was the antiaircraft officer on USS Tuscaloosa. I said "Don't you know the difference between a C-47 towing a glider and German dive bombers?" Dank recalls. "All he said was 'I was responsible for the lives of 2,000 men.'"

The Allies' invasion---called Operation Dragoon---was ordered to cut off the German forces along the Mediterranean coast from the Normandy invasion force to the north. It opened a second front and bought time for re-supplying Allied troops.

Co-pilot Gordon Mohr was gliding in when he and pilot Charles Walker went into a dive. They were carrying a jeep and three infantrymen. "We couldn't pull out" I said "This is the way it goes" recalls Mohr. "We were at an angle where a severe crash could have occurred. At the last moment before we hit the ground, the glider leveled out and we smashed into a tree on my side. The impact pulled me out of the cockpit and put me under the fuselage."

Mohr had to severely sprained ankles and brush burns but was able to walk, with some pain. "When it was happening, I had a certain peace come over me," he says. "Afterward, I yelled like hell: What the hell happened to this glider?"

But the worst was yet to come, only a month later.

Fifteen hundred feet over the English Channel, pilot Charles Eckhardt was telling a frightened trooper how to fly a glider. They were headed for Holland, part of the largest armada of airborne troops in history. But none of the gliders had co-pilots. If Eckhardt got killed, the trooper would have to land the aircraft by himself.

"I told him how to control the airspeed and to just fly straight ahead and not make any turns unless absolutely necessary," Eckhardt says. "He looked at me and said 'Damn it, you stay alive until we get to the ground!'"

Long chains of gliders and towplanes passed over Belgium in September 1944, heading for their landing zones in Holland while the Nazis peppered them with flak and small-arms fire. They were part of Operation Market-Garden, an allied push toward Germany. More than 1,600 of the 1,900 American gliders in the mission got through with hundreds of trailers and jeeps and tons of ammunition. But the Nazis were ready for them.

Eckhardt's former co-pilot, Bill Ddonkin, was flying a glider on Eckhardt's left when the towplane was hit by fire and started down. Donkin cut off and was later taken prisoner by the Germans. Eckhardt didn't see his friend again until the end of the war.

Once Eckhardt's glider was over Zon, he landed in a flat, open field with only buildings and enemy fire to avoid. Many gliders came down at high speeds to get out of the heavy enemy fire. Nearby, one came in too fast, dug its nose in the sandy soil and flipped over.

Pilot Tip Randolph says the bullets went through his glider "like it was a base drum. You could hear it go 'thump, thump, thump'. Then there was a 'ping' when it hit the metal frame." He also landed near Zon. "But we didn't get any damage that would affect the flying ability of the glider. We got down all right."

Pilot Robert Casey descended toward a turnip field at about 80 mph, just clearing a fence. The sudden stop forced the hinged front of the glider to lift up and a trailer to fall out. "The good Lord had been with us," he says. "The strong headwind and soft plowed field saved us from certain disaster."

Pilot Milton Dank glided onto a "fake minfield" ...a plot of land near Nijmegen where the Nazis had put up signs that said, in German---"Attention--Minefield."

"We met a Dutch resistance man who took us to an apartment house, where we stayed the night," he says. "I remember the bed was spotless with crisp white sheets and pillowcases. We were filthy from marching so we didn't get into bed. We slept on the floor while a British battery of heavy artillery was banging away nearby."

Market-Garden failed. The Allies would have to find another way into Germany.

The weather was perfect---clear, bright and calm. David Kaufman, two fellow glider pilots and two mechanics were flying a glider in January 1945 from Lae, New Guinea, to their base at Biak, in the Shouten Islands. A routine mission.

Kaufman turned over the controls to Lt. Rayhmond Nutting and heard a "popping sound," then "almost immediate silence as we rapidly lost speed.:

The towplane had released their rope---for no apparent reason---and the glider descended toward a forbidding stretch of the New Guinea shoreline, between Wewak and Aitape. The crew tossed out supplies to lighten the aircraft and Nutting headed for a hilly beach, the only open place for miles, since the jungle grew right up to the water.

"We came straight toward that little strip of sand, 50 feet off the water," says Kaufman, now 78 of Colledgeville. The glider "mushed around the last turn between a couple of shattered palm trees, missing them by inches, and plopped into the soft sand."

It was leaning about 30 degrees because of the slope of the beach. The right wheel was in the surf, the left on land. "We stepped out of that glider on the land side and never got our feet wet," said Kaufman. "The towplane circled until he saw we were safe."

About that time, a large number of figure moved out of the jungle toward them. "We figured it had to be at least a regiment of Japanese," he said. "What a relief when we saw it was a group of natives."

The hard part now was getting rescued. An Australian boat arrived off shore the next day, and a dinghy with two men started in. Their boat was swamped in 10 to 15 - foot waves that broke with a loud roar.

One of the men swam in and signaled the ship that they would try to swim out. "We made it about 30 feet and were stopped in our tracks," says Kaufman. "It was like trying to swim through a stone wall...[the islanders] ran into the water and tossed the ropes to the rest of the crew and pulled them into shore."

Kaufman and his comrades gave up being rescued and struck out through the thick, steamy jungle with islanders as guides. After days of fighting insects, snakes and miserable heat, they ran into an Australian patrol and got jeep rides to a Royal Air Force Base.

"By now, you could smell us coming from a mile away," he says. "We got celebrity treatment from the base commander. First a bath, then clean, dry clothing."

Medic Wallace E. Thompson wanted no part of gliders. He was a paratrooper and didn't trust them. But he had orders to stay with his jeep when a glider brought it into Wesel, Germany.

"We told him, 'Take it easy. It's like riding a bus,'" says former co-pilot Bruce Merryman. In March 1945, the glider was gliding in when a German artillery shell smashed through the cargo area. "It's almost like slow motion," says Merryman. "Things are happening, and you have to let nature take its course."

Shrapnel cut the rope lashing the jeep, and Thompson took off on the ride of his left. The jeep opened the hinged front of the glider and hurtled to the ground ahead of the aircraft.

Thompson was sitting in the front seat of the jeep, uninjured, after his 10 to 20 foot drop. And Merryman and pilot John Heffner were lying on their backs, still strapped into their seats in the opened, hinged nose of the glider. The fuselage smashed into the earth behind them, its tail sticking in the air. They made a one-point landing--and survived.

"At almost the same instant we touched the ground, the German gunner removed our left wing tip with a second round," says Merryman. "I used the butt of my gun to smack out the Plexiglass, and we dove into a ditch and found the medic. He asked us what happened and started cussing. He assured me he would never ride in another glider...He said they might shoot him and put him in, but that's the only way he'd ever get in another glider."

Merryman, now 70 of Conroe, Texas, and his comrades were participating in Operation Varsity, the Allies' push across the Rhine into the heartland of Hitler's Third Reich.

"While we were still in the ditch, a B-24 bomber plane with the right inboard engine on fire came down, barely clearing a railroad embankment by us, and bellied in on the other side," says Merryman.

Glider pilot Robert Casey glided through the maelstrom into a farmer's back yard. He quickly headed for some woods where he heard another glider scrape across the trees overhead and crash into the ground. The pilot's leg was severed in the wreck.

"There were enough people there to help him so I started looking for the command post," he says. "On my way, I noticed a dogfight overhead, at high altitude. Now, I felt the greatest danger was from falling wing tanks, not snipers."

While Casey was watching the sky, he saw another blood-chilling sight. "A chute falling from inside the bomb bay of one of the B-24s dragged an airman out..." he says. "It slid across the bottom of the B-24, snagged the tail momentarily and then released. As it did, I could see the airman struggling to separate the shroud lines so the chute might open, but it did not and he fell to certain death below."

Tip Randolph was flying "double tow"---two CG-4a gliders to a towplane---when the other glider started falling apart. The fabric and wood of his left wing began peeling off, and the tail began to droop. Randolph saw the line snap and the aircraft drop. All were killed.

The towplane got back into formation and the first thing I noticed when we got to the Rhine River was how smoky everything looked," says Randolph. "The smoke was

blowing across where we were going to land." Seconds later, he had much bigger problems.

The Nazis were firing phosphorous rounds at the planes and gliders as they passed overhead. "We took a couple hits in the left wing, and it was on fire inside," he says. "Balls of flames started falling out of the wing. I thought, 'My God, what the hell is this?'" Then we took a hit in the cargo area and it started the fabric burning on the fuselage. We were filling up with smoke."

The troopers on board knew what to do. They started slicing the fabric so the burning skin would blow away. In the cockpit, Randolph cut off at his landing site and began plunging through the smoke, looking for a place to land.

"We lost sight of everybody, but when we were 75 feet off ground, the smoke started thinning out," he says. "I went past a barn. I remember wondering whether I would clear it. I don't know if I was a foot away or 15 feet. The next thing I saw was a tree and I skidded over to the side of it and we got out of the glider. It looked like a picked chicken. Most of its skin was gone. You could see right through it."

The glider pilots were spared further missions when Germany and Japan surrendered. After landings in the Philippines, Burma, Sicily and across Europe, their job was over.

Today, the veterans of those engineless aircraft are frail like their gliders. But when they gather for reunions, the years melt away. Some of the bounce returns to their step, and the pranks and off-color jokes come back. Last year at a reunion in Elmira NY, some of them went soaring again, this time for fun, in sleek, modern gliders.

"We have a deep bond with fellow pilots; it goes deeper than normal friendships says Pete Buckley. "Flying gliders made the adrenaline pump; it was exciting, crazy and scary as hell. All of us share these memories.

Only 5,000 men wore the wings with the G. There would be no others. By 1952, with helicopters ferrying troops in Korea and shiny jets streaking across the skies, the glider program was ended.

Memo from Jack Mancinelli:

Ed---if room permits, please include the following in your next issue. OK, Jack.

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS.....OCTOBER 5 - 9, 1994

WHY? Because we hope to have the largest gathering of 315th members, their spouses and, hopefully, their family members than ever before. We are making this reunion as convenient as possible for everyone to attend. St. Louis will be one day driving time for over one-third of our membership. Also, the hotel will have free parking facilities for members arriving in RVs who are registered at the hotel. If you are flying in, St. Louis is the hub for every major airline---with a maximum flight time of less than 3 hours for 99% of our members. And MORE: the RADISSON Hotel, their newest addition, is one of the most attractive we have used for our reunions -- Atrium, waterfall, pool, hot tub, airport pick-up and most important, the price will be \$66.00 per room per day for 2 persons and \$10.00 more for each additional person; it is my understanding that in 1994 the new inter-city monorail system will be in place making it convenient to travel about the city quickly and inexpensively; St. Louis is considered a world-class visitors' city which should give us much to see and enjoy.

Jim and Audrey Fidler (309th) who live in St. Louis, will host the reunion. Also, Bernie and Bette Brown, who hosted the very successful reunion in Albuquerque, have agreed to manage the hospitality room and assist in other areas. Bob Cloer is up-dating the Reunion Guide advisory to be sure that all the best is incorporated in the planning of the reunion. The best of everything is being included to assure every one the most enjoyable reunion ever.

Jim has already confirmed the hotel agreement and is now completing arrangements for all the other activities that will fill our schedule. We may not have many more times "at bat" down our youth and proud memory lane. And, except for our contemporaries, very few wish to listen. Well, those who attend our reunions not only listen, but, in the Hospitality Room, we all seem to join together and for those moments not only recall those proud days, but once again we are young---in another dimension.

Start planning now. Call your old buddies and be sure that they will "MEET YOU IN ST. LOUIS----October, 1994

---Jack Mancinelli

**WITH REGRET, WE RECORD THE DEATH
OF THESE COMRADES:**

Charles G. McFarland	November 15, 1991
Jack Olds	March 10, 1992
Tolly (George T.) Jones	November 4, 1992

Quite a while ago, George Peavey, a Glider Pilot in the 34th Squadron was kind enough to send your editor a clipping from a Rochester NH paper. We reproduce it here with apologies to George for the long delay in running the story.

Rochester vet's WWII glider tales harrowing. Peavey landed glider in field near battles

By Colles Stowell, Rochester Bureau Chief

ROCHESTER---Watching televised reports of the Army 82nd Airborne Division in the Persian Gulf conjured up distant images of flak spattered across the sky and the challenge of landing a glider in a field near battles.

And for retired Air Force Capt. George Peavey, these flashbacks to World War II focused on the excitement and peril of the missions he flew as a glider pilot providing support materials or personnel to the paratroopers who had landed moments before.

The mention of the 82nd Airborne refueled memories of one mission he flew from England to Holland in September 1944 called "Operation Market-Garden." He flew a jeep into a field near Mook and Nijmegen for the troops from the 82nd Airborne.

Peavey, assigned to the 315th Troop Carrier Group in England, piloted a CG4A Waco combat glider from England to a field just south of Arnhem where the British Airborne met with considerable resistance from German forces.

The gliders, he explained, were towed with a 300 ft. rope behind a C-47 Douglas aircraft, and when the plane approached the target landing area, a green light would flash on the top of the dome of the C-47.

The pilot of the glider would then have to trip a release that would unhitch his plane, all the while scanning the land below for potential landing areas.

Landing was frequently difficult, if not perilous, depending on the geography of the targeted area, he said. The glider itself had a wing span of 183 feet, and a body length of 48 feet, with a cargo capability of carrying a jeep with related supplies, or an anti-tank gun with ammunition or 15 combat glider infantrymen.

Once the glider landed, if it was not destroyed, the nose cone would be lifted and the cargo would be evacuated. Combat glider pilots, trained in ground combat, then became ground soldiers until their next set of orders came in.

The trip to Holland lasted about 4 hours, Peavey said, thinking back on the appearance the sky as it was filled with aircraft that day.

Anti-aircraft artillery diminished the size of the mission along the journey, especially when crossing into Dutch territory, on the path toward the target area near the landing zone for the paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division, he said.

In Peavey's estimation, about 75 percent of the planes that left England successfully arrived at the target site, losing many planes to anti-aircraft, weather conditions and equipment malfunctions.

Near the target area, the green light went on, Peavey detached the glider and successfully landed in an open field where the cargo was discharged.

"The fields in Holland were better to land in," Peavey said in comparison with those he landed in during the D-Day invasion in France.

In Holland, he only had to maneuver the glider over a couple of ditches during the landing.

During Operation "Overlord" in France, he had to contend with hedges and trees and very small fields which made stopping a dangerous effort. On June 6, Peavey left Spanhoe, England, about 4 a.m. with other members of his troop headed for St. Mere-Eglise, about 5-10 miles inside the heavy artillery battle between the allied ships and German defense positions along the Normandy coastline.

"There were planes all over the place," he said, adding "some had paratroopers and others towed gliders." The tow planes could either carry paratroopers or tow a glider, but could not do both, he explained.

"There was anti-aircraft fire in all directions" he said, describing the black-spotted sky over the beach-head confrontation. For about 20 minutes, Peavey's glider was dragged through deadly gun battles as the Germans were exchanging fire with the allies and occasionally directing fire at the planes overhead.

As soon as he crossed into France, Peavey prepared himself for what he knew was going to be a rough landing. Prior to the arrival of the gliders, some pathfinder troops landed in the target area with the mission to set up a light and a smoke pot, to give gliders an indication of "suitable" landing areas, and an indication of the wind direction, according to Peavey.

But many of the pathfinders did not make it, and when he saw the green light, he did not see any lights or smoke pots. "I knew I wasn't going to make a smooth airport landing", he said, explaining that he had less than five minutes, as he was losing altitude to land the plane.

Pinpointing a field where he figured on making a "controlled crash landing", Peavey brought the glider down, preparing to slow it down any safe way possible. The wings were made of fabric and wood, he said, and as they were ripped off from the fuselage from trees and brush, the body of the glider's momentum slowed down, he said.

"I stopped right on a hedgerow" he said. "If I'd have gone any further, I'd probably not be here today."

The sounds of the heavy artillery, the sight of flak-spattered sky are long gone now for Peavey, who currently resides in a quiet neighborhood on Anita Street with his wife Sarah. But as the conflict continues in the Persian Gulf, occasional images of landing a combat glider near a battlefield resurface as the retired Air Force pilot remembers the war he fought.

**Bill Brinson passes along another item sent to him by Allen
C. Stover of 3444 Walker Drive, Ellicott City MD 21042:**

UNDERAGE VETERANS SOUGHT

A national veterans association is seeking veterans who falsified their age and served in the U.S. Military UNDER the age of 17. A national reunion will be held in October. A free handbook on government policy on underage veterans will be sent on request.

(If the 315th had any members who served while UNDER the age of 17, they can contact Stover for additional information at the above-mentioned address.)

Who will ever forget the mountains of "scrambled eggs" we used to get during our service overseas? Those of us who didn't know, thought the cooks actually scrambled real eggs and that was what we were served. It didn't take long for us to realize that what we were eating was a concoction of powdered eggs, but truth to tell, we got used to them in time. The following poem by a Cpl. Joseph W. Robinson appeared in *THE STARS AND STRIPES* which was published in Britain for circulation to troops stationed there. Robinson mourns the passing of the *real* egg. Incidentally, the poem was included in a clipping from the aforementioned paper sent to us by Bill Brinson some time ago.

LAMENT OF A POWDERED EGG

*Once, in the dear dead days now gone by
I could bring a gleam to any man's eye.
I was a source of joy and pride
Turned over light or with a sunny side.
Now look at me. I'm just a mess,
A sticky mass of unhappiness.
How fickle-fate my destiny,
An omelet or a fritessee.
Universally I am hated
Simply because I'm dehydrated.
Scientists about me rave;
Look at the shipping space I save!
Soldiers, sailors, everywhere
Greet me with a hardened stare,
Pass me by with much chagrin,
Damn! It's powdered eggs again!
Oh Lord, those eggs that come after me
Serve them as an egg should be.
Scramble them, they won't care,
But, please leave their water there.
Must every egg for the duration
Go through the process—dehydration?
Calories, minerals, the boys all need 'em
But powdered eggs—they just won't eat 'em!*

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DUES PAYMENT.....DUES PAYMENT.....DUES PAYMENT.....DUES PAYMENT..

**Robert M. Davis, Treasurer
WWII 315th Troop Carrier Group Association
7025 Wind Run Way
Stone Mountain GA 30087**

**Dear Bob: Here's my check for \$10.00....1 year's dues to the Association
20.00....2 years dues.**

NAME.....SQUADRON.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....ZIP.....

THANK YOU.....THANK YOU.....THANK YOU.....THANK YOU.